What Christian Denominations identify as "High Church"?

Most commonly, “High Church” is associated with liturgically formal forms of Anglicanism (especially Anglo-Catholic), as well as other sacramental, highly ritualized traditions such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Within Protestantism, the term usually refers to specific wings or congregations in certain denominations rather than whole communions.[1] [2] [3]

Core idea of “High Church”

- Emphasizes a **sacramental** theology, formal liturgy, set prayers, and a strong sense of priestly or episcopal authority.[3] [1]
- Typically includes vestments, incense, a full church calendar, and a structured order of service centered on Word and Eucharist.[1] [3]

Denominations commonly identified as High Church (in whole or in part)

- **Anglican / Episcopal**: Historic source of the term; includes Old High Church and Anglo-Catholic streams that consciously stress continuity with pre-Reformation Catholic tradition.[3] [1]
- **Lutheran**: Many national and confessional Lutheran bodies have a self-consciously catholic liturgical life; some are explicitly described as “high church Lutheranism.”[1] [3]
- **Roman Catholic**: Not usually called “high church” internally, but in broader Protestant parlance, Catholic worship is paradigmatically high in its ritual, sacramentalism, and hierarchy.[2] [3]
- **Eastern Orthodox (and Oriental Orthodox)**: Likewise not using the label for themselves, but often cited as an archetype of highly ceremonial, sacramental worship and strong episcopal structure.[2] [3]

Denominational “wings” that may be High Church

- **Methodist**: Some Methodist churches, especially those retaining a robust liturgy and eucharistic focus, are described as having a high-church wing.[2] [1]
- **Presbyterian**: A minority segment, sometimes termed “high church Presbyterianism,” favors elaborate liturgy, traditional vesture, and a stronger sacramental emphasis.[1] [2]
- **Other Protestants**: Individual congregations or movements (e.g., some “evangelical catholic” Lutherans or liturgical evangelicals) adopt high-church practices without their larger denomination doing so uniformly.[4] [1]

Denominations usually contrasted as Low Church

- Baptist, most Pentecostal, many independent and “Bible” churches, and much of contemporary evangelicalism are typically categorized as low church, stressing simplicity of worship, minimal liturgy, and congregational involvement over elaborate ritual.[3] [2]

In short, “High Church” is not a fixed denominational label so much as a style and theology of worship most clearly embodied in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Roman Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, with high-church minorities in some Methodist and Presbyterian contexts.[2] [3] [1]

⁂

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_church
2. https://www.gotquestions.org/high-church-low-church.html
3. https://www.crivoice.org/lowhighchurch.html
4. https://conciliarpost.com/christian-traditions/lutheran-lcms/high-church-christianity-evangelicalism-and-the-snob-problem/
5. https://larrysanger.org/2025/07/the-denominational-distinctives-ii-the-high-church-distinctives/
6. https://www.reddit.com/r/Catholicism/comments/19dyv9e/what_exactly_is_meant_by_the_terms_low_church/
7. https://www.reddit.com/r/Anglicanism/comments/q8vpgj/what_are_the_differences_between_low_church_and/
8. https://christianity.fandom.com/wiki/High_church
9. https://www.facebook.com/groups/196783340920609/posts/1660167944582134/